



Martin J. Chávez, Mayor

City WellNews

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February Wellness Tips

Nutrition Tip

Taste Test. As you prepare dinner, always use a clean spoon to "taste" and never put that spoon back into the food without washing it - whether it is yours or otherwise.

Fitness Tip

Tired of the same old curls? Next time, do your curls standing on one foot. Grab two dumbbells at a slightly lower weight than you normally use. Do your normal number of reps standing only on your right foot, then the next set on your left foot- so on and so forth. This will improve your balance, strengthen your core muscles (trunk area) and build arm strength and definition.

Safety Tip

Fireplace Safety. Though it is tempting, do not burn anything other than wood in the fireplace. Papers ignite suddenly and burn quickly causing a flash fire.

February is Heart Health Month

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for U.S. adults? But there's also some good news. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), the rate of death from heart disease is declining because many people now pay more attention to taking care of their heart. Knowing the causes and risk factors for heart disease can help you prevent it and keep your heart healthy.

How Do I Know if I'm at Risk? Several factors may increase your risk for heart disease. Answering the following questions may help you find out if you are at risk:

- Do you have a family history of heart disease?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you smoke?
- Is your total cholesterol level over 240?
- Is your blood pressure level over 140/90?
- Do you exercise less than 30 minutes a day on most days of the week?
- Are you overweight?

If you answered yes to at least two of these questions, you may have a higher risk of developing heart disease.

Can I Lower My Risk? Although you can't change your age or family history, many risk factors are within your control. The AHA suggests taking the following steps to help keep your heart strong and healthy:

Quit smoking. According to the AHA, your risk for a heart attack doubles if you smoke.

■ **Watch your diet.** Simple changes in your diet can significantly lower your risk for heart disease. Aim for a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet with lots of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods.

■ **Get moving.** Regular exercise strengthens your heart, improves circulation and works with your diet to help you maintain a healthy weight. The AHA recommends that healthy adults get 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days of the week.

■ **Visit your doctor.** Your doctor can help you identify early symptoms of heart disease with certain tests and screenings. See your doctor regularly to help monitor your risk.

Sources: CIGNA HealthCare & the American Heart Association

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Are You Seeing Clearly?

Is your vision cloudy? Do you have to change your eyewear prescription often? If so, then you may have cataracts, a common eye condition among older adults.

What Are Cataracts?

A cataract forms when protein clumps together and clouds the lens in your eye. Cataracts usually aren't painful. They are sometimes present at birth, but because cataracts tend to grow slowly, people usually develop them in their 60s. More than half of Americans age 80 or older have a cataract or have had one removed, according to the National Eye Institute.

Cataracts can cause you to have trouble reading or driving. If you have a cataract in one eye, it can't spread to your other eye. However, they can develop in both eyes.

What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of cataracts can include:

- blurry or clouded vision
- sensitivity to light
- trouble seeing at night
- seeing halos around lights
- frequent eyewear prescription changes

What Are the Risk Factors?

Doctors aren't sure what causes cataracts, but risk factors include a family history of cataracts, diabetes, past eye injury, excessive exposure to sunlight and smoking.

You may help to prevent cataracts by not smoking and protecting your eyes from the sun.

How Are Cataracts Treated?

When a cataract is in its early stages, a stronger eyewear prescription may help improve your vision. Stronger lighting may also help. If a cataract interferes with everyday tasks, such as reading or watching TV, surgery may be necessary to remove it.

Sources: <http://www.everydayhealth.com> & CIGNA HealthCare

Mayor's Monthly Green Tip

Recycle your toothbrush. It's reported that over 25,000 tons of toothbrushes end up in America's landfills each year. This is something we usually don't give much thought to - we use them, we throw them away. Some manufacturers have listened to the call to minimize waste and are now making toothbrush handles from recyclable plastics. The plastic is reclaimed, melted down and used for making other items such as outdoor furniture. Next time you're shopping for a toothbrush, look for these. Its also likely their "green" credentials will be mentioned on the packet.

Source: <http://www.greenlivingtips.com>

Colon Cancer Screening Saves Lives

Colorectal cancer affects both men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, and is most often found in people aged 50 years or older. For men, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer after prostate and lung cancers. For women, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer after breast and lung cancers. Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. Screening can find precancerous polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum—so that they can be removed before turning into cancer. Screening also helps find colorectal cancer at an early stage, when treatment often leads to a cure.

Regular screening, beginning at age 50, is the key to preventing colorectal cancer. Common screenings include:

- **Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)**, which checks for hidden blood in three consecutive stool samples, should be administered every year.
- **Flexible sigmoidoscopy**, where physicians use a flexible, lighted tube (sigmoidoscope) to inspect visually the interior walls of the rectum and part of the colon, should be administered every 5 years.
- **Double-contrast barium enema**, a test that uses a series of X-rays of the colon and rectum (taken after the patient is given an enema containing barium dye followed by an injection of air in the lower bowel), should be administered every 5 years.
- **Colonoscopy**, where physicians use a flexible, lighted tube (colonoscope) to inspect visually the interior walls of the rectum and the entire colon, should be administered every 10 years. During this procedure, samples of tissue may be collected for closer examination, or polyps may be removed.

People at higher risk of developing colorectal cancer should begin screening at a younger age, and may need to be tested more frequently. For more information, read the current colorectal cancer screening guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

Questions to Ask your Doctor: Consider some of these questions that you may want to ask your doctor when discussing colorectal cancer screening:

- What is colorectal cancer?
- Do I need to be tested? Why? How often will I need to be screened?
- Who will do the exam?
- What is the screening test you recommend? Why?
- What's involved in screening? How do I prepare?
- How long does the test take? Can I return to work after the test? Can I drive? Will the test be uncomfortable or painful? Is there any risk involved?
- When will I get the results?
- If I have a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, do I need to be tested before I'm 50 or more often than other people?

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov>

The Healthy Benefits of Smiling

Smiling is a great way to brighten your day, connect with people and give a health benefit to your body. Smiling also works as a tool to counteract the effects of stress and depression. Smiling is proven to "trick" your body into believing that life is good, thereby decreasing the risk of depression. So put a smile on, even in times of stress, and before long you'll be smiling for real.

Smiling Helps You Keep Positive: Try this exercise: Put on a smile. Now try to think of something negative without losing the smile. It's difficult. When we smile our body is receiving a message that "Life is Good!" Keep a smile on your face to avoid the effects of depression, stress and worry.

Smiling Can Reduce Your Blood Pressure: There is a noticeable reduction in blood pressure when a person smiles. Give it a try if you have a blood pressure monitor at home. Sit quietly for a few minutes and take a reading. Then smile for a minute and take another reading while still smiling.

A smile is Contagious: When someone is smiling they lighten up the room, change the moods of others, and make things happier. A smiling person brings a sense of happiness with them. Smile more and you will draw people to you.

Smiling Decreases Stress: Stress can really be shown in our faces. Smiling helps to keep us from looking tired, worn down, and overwhelmed. When you are in a time of stress, take time to put on a smile. The stress should be reduced and you'll be better able to take action in preventing future stress.

Smiling Lifts Our Mood: Next time you are feeling blue, try putting on a smile. There's a good chance your mood will adjust for the better. Putting on a smile can trick the body into helping you change your mood.

Smiling Strengthens the Immune System: Smiling helps the immune system to function better. When you smile, immune function improves possibly because you are more relaxed. Smiling is another line of defense in preventing the flu and common cold.

Smiling Makes Us More Attractive: We are naturally drawn to people who smile due to an attraction factor. We tend to want to socialize with the smiling person to figure out what is so good. Frowns, grimaces and glares can all push people away, but a smile will draw them in.

Smiling Makes You Look Younger: The muscles used to smile lift the face, making a person appear younger. So instead of going for a face lift, just try smiling your way through the day. You'll look younger and feel better.

Smiling Makes You Appear Confident: People who smile appear more confident, are more likely to be promoted, and more likely to be approached. Put on a smile at meetings and appointments and people will respond to you differently.

Smiling Releases Endorphins: Research shows that smiling releases endorphins, natural pain killers, and serotonin. Collectively these three make us feel good. Smiling has the effects of a natural drug similar to the effects of exercise.

Sources: <http://www.webmd.com> & <http://www.about.com>



Maintaining Composure During Uncertain Economic Times

Investing is challenging enough, but then how do you make sense of negative economic news and the resulting effect on your portfolio. Join us for a one hour presentation by Rick Stern, a Certified Financial Planner with ICMA-RC. Rick will discuss your concerns about current economic and market conditions. In a strong economy investors tend to take on too much risk, and when it's weak, they tend to become too apprehensive. Although you can't predict the future, you can prepare for it. We will take a step back to explore the bigger picture in order to provide perspective about the best way to reach your financial goals when faced with turbulent financial events.

DATE: Tuesday, February 24

TIME: 12 NOON

LOCATION: Vincent E. Griego City Council Chambers, lower level 1 Civic Plaza

Rick Stern will be available for individual appointments following the noon presentation. To schedule your appointment with Rick Stern please call your local ICMA-RC representative Dennis Dixel 899-5011.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE: 2/4/09 TIME 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
PLACE: SOLID WASTE (EDITH)
BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

DATE: 2/11/09 TIME: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
PLACE: PINO YARDS (BUILDING F)
BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

DATE: 2/12/09 TIME: 12:10 PM – 12:50 PM
PLACE: VINCENT E. GRIEGO COUNCIL CHAMBERS
LUNCH TIME WELLNESS SEMINAR:
“MAINTAINING A HEALTHY HEART”

DATE: 2/18/09 TIME: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
PLACE: AVIATION (PRESS ROOM)
ONSITE EMPLOYEE MAMMOGRAPHY SCREENINGS
BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

DATE: 2/25/09 TIME: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
PLACE: AFD FIRE ACADEMY, 11500 SUNSET GARDENS SW
BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

DATE: 2/24/09 TIME: 12:10 PM – 12:50 PM
PLACE: VINCENT E. GRIEGO COUNCIL CHAMBERS
LUNCH TIME WELLNESS SEMINAR:
“MAINTAINING COMPOSURE DURING UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC TIMES”

Topics you would like us to discuss in City WellNews?

Contact:

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Questions about Insurance & Benefits?

Contact:

**The Insurance & Benefits Office
768-3758**

February Vegetable of the Month



Calabaza Squash

Calabaza is a type of pumpkin-like squash that is round in shape and varies in size. It can be as large as a watermelon or as small as a cantaloupe. The color of calabaza can also vary and may include greens, tans, reds and oranges. Some squash are all one color while other calabaza are multi-colored and may include all of colors listed above. This squash is popular in the Caribbean as well as Central and South America. It is also commonly called a West Indian Pumpkin.

Calabaza is often sold already chopped into chunks in many Latin markets. This is because of the difficulty many have in chopping the whole squash. Select pieces with a fresh, moist and unblemished flesh. Soft or wet spots means the squash is beginning to spoil. The color of the flesh should be a bright orange. Whole squash are more difficult to find, but if you find one, select one that still has the stem attached and is heavy for its size. You should avoid purchasing a squash with bruises, cuts, or soft spots. Calabaza is available year round.

Calabaza Soup

Makes 6 servings

1½ lb Calabaza squash, diced
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 garlic clove
4 scallions, minced
1 Tbsp dried thyme
1 tsp allspice
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp fenugreek
1 large ripe tomato, chopped
¼ cup coconut milk
¼ cup low-fat milk (1%)

Simmer all the ingredients except the milks in 5 cups of water for 1 hour. Strain the liquid into a bowl and allow the solids to cool. Puree the cooled solids.

Return the puree to the soup pot along with the strained liquid and add the milks. Simmer, uncovered, until the mixture is thickened to your desired consistency.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 106, Calories from Fat 25%, Fat 3g, Protein 3g, Carbohydrates 18g, Fiber 4g, Cholesterol 2mg, Sodium 187mg.

Source: www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov